

TWENTY MINUTES FOR REFRESHMENTS

BY OWEN WISTER

UPON turning over again my diary of that excursion to the Pacific, I find that I set out from Atlantic waters on the 30th day of a backward and forlorn April, which had come and done nothing toward making its share of spring, but had gone, missing its chance, leaving the trees as bare as it had received them from the winds of March. It was not bleak weather alone, but care, that I sought to escape by a change of sky; and I hoped for some fellow-traveller who might begin to interest my thoughts at once. No such person met me in the several Pullmans I inhabited from that afternoon until the forenoon of the following Friday. Through that long distance, though I had slanted southwestward across a multitude of States and vegetations, and the Mississippi lay eleven hundred miles to my rear, the single event is my purchasing some cat's-eyes of the news-agent at Sierra Blanca. Save this, my diary contains only neat additions of daily expenses, and moral reflections of a delicate and restrained melancholy. They were Pecos cat's-eyes, he told me, obtained in the rocky cañons of that stream, and destined to be worth little until fashion turned from foreign jewels to become aware of these fine native stones. And I, glad to possess the jewels of my country, chose two bracelets and a necklace of them, paying but twenty dollars for fifteen or sixteen cat's-eyes, and resolved to give them a setting worthy of their beauty. The diary continues with moral reflections upon the servility of our taste before anything European, and the handwriting is most clear. It abruptly becomes hurried, and at length wellnigh illegible. It is best, I think, that you should have this portion as it comes, unpolished, unamended, unarranged—hot, so to speak, from my immediate pencil, instead of cold from my subsequent pen. I shall disguise certain names, but that is all.

Friday forenoon, May 5.—I don't have to gaze at my cat's-eyes to kill time any more. I'm not the only passenger any more. There's a lady. She got in at El

Paso. She has taken the drawing-room, but sits outside reading newspaper cuttings and writing letters. She is sixty, I should say, and has a cap and one gray curl. This comes down over her left ear as far as a purple ribbon which suspends a medallion at her throat. She came in wearing a sage-green duster of pongee silk, pretty nice, only the buttons are as big as those largest mint drops. "You porter," she said, "brush this." He put down her many things and received it. Her dress was sage-green and pretty nice too. "You porter," said she, "open every window. Why, they are, I declare! What's the thermometer in this car?" "Ninety-five, ma'am. Folks mostly travelling—" "That will do, porter. Now you go make me a pitcher of lemonade right quick." She went into the state-room and shut the door. When she came out she was dressed in what appeared to be chintz bed-room curtains. They hang and flow loosely about her, and are covered with a pattern of pink peonies. She has slippers—Turkish—that stare up in the air, pretty handsome and comfortable. But I never before saw any one travel with fly-paper. It must be hard to pack. But it's quite an idea in this train. Fully a dozen flies have stuck to it already; and she reads her clippings, and writes away, and sips another glass of lemonade, all with the most extreme appearance of leisure, not to say sloth. I can't imagine how she manages to produce this atmosphere of indolence when in reality she is steadily occupied. Possibly the way she sits. But I think it's partly the bed-room curtains.

These notes were interrupted by the entrance of the new conductor. "If you folks have chartered a private car, just say so," he shouted instantly at the sight of us. He stood still at the extreme end and removed his hat, which was acknowledged by the lady. "Travel is surely very light, Gadsden," she assented, and went on with her writing. But he remained standing still, and shouting like an orator: "Sprinkle the floor of this car, Julius,

and let the pore passengers get a breath of cool. My lands!" He fanned himself sweepingly with his hat. He seemed but little larger than a red squirrel, and precisely that color. Sorrel hair, sorrel eyebrows, sorrel freckles, light sorrel mustache, thin aggressive nose, receding chin, and black, attentive, prominent eyes. He approached, and I gave him my ticket, which is as long as a neck-tie. "Why, you ain't middle-aged!" he shouted, and a singular croak sounded behind me. But the lady was writing. "I have been growing younger since I left home," I replied. "That's it, that's it," he sang; "a man's always as old as he feels, and a woman—is ever young," he finished. "I see you are true to the old teachings and the old-time chivalry, Gadsden," said the lady, continuously busy. "Yes, ma'am. Jacob served seven years for Leah and seven more for Rachel." "Such men are raised to-day in every worthy Louisiana home, Gadsden, be it ever so humble." "Yes, ma'am. Give a fresh sprinkle to the floor, Julius, soon as it goes to get dry. Excuse me, but do you shave yourself, sir?" I told him that I did, but without excusing him. "You will see that I have a reason for asking," he consequently pursued, and took out of his coat tails a round tin box handsomely labelled "Nat. Fly Paper Co.," so that I supposed it was thus, of course, that the lady came by her fly-paper. But this was pure coincidence, and the conductor explained: "That company's me and a man at Shreveport, but he dissatisfies me right frequently. You know what heaven a good razor is for a man, and what you feel about a bad one. Vaseline and ground shells," he said, opening the box, "and I'm not saying anything except it will last your lifetime and never hardens. Rub the size of a pea on the fine side of your strop, spread it to an inch with your thumb. May I beg a favor on so short a meeting? Join me in the gentlemen's lavatory with your razor-strop in five minutes. I have to attend to a corpse in the baggage-car, and will return at once." "Anybody's corpse I know, Gadsden?" said the lady. "No, ma'am. Just a corpse."

When I joined him, for I was now willing to do anything, he was apologetic again. "'Tis a short acquaintance," he said, "but may I also beg your razor? Quick as I get out of the National Fly

I am going to register my new label. First there will be Uncle Sam embracing the world, signifying this mixture is universal, then my name, then the word *Stropine*, which is a novelty and carries copyright, and I shall win comfort and doubtless luxury. The post barber at Fort Bayard took a dozen off me at sight to retail to the niggers of the Twenty-fourth, and as he did not happen to have the requisite cash on his person I charged him two roosters and fifty cents, and both of us done well. He's after more Stropine, and I got Pullman prices for my roosters, the buffet-car being out of chicken à la Marengo. There is your razor, sir, and I appreciate your courtesy." It was beautifully sharpened, and I bought a box of the Stropine and asked him who the lady was. "Mrs. Porcher Brewton!" he exclaimed. "Have you never met her socially? Why she—why she is the most intellectual lady in Bee Bayou." "Indeed!" I said. "Why she visits New Orleans, and Charleston, and all the principal centres of refinement, and is welcomed in Washington. She converses freely with our statesmen, and is considered a queen of learning. Why she writes po'try, sir, and is strong-minded. But a man wouldn't want to pick her up for a fool, all the samey." "I shouldn't; I don't," said I. "Don't you do it, sir. She's run her plantation all alone since the Colonel was killed in sixty-two. She taught me Sunday-school when I was a lad, and she used to catch me at her pecan-trees 'most every time in Bee Bayou."

He went forward, and I went back with the Stropine in my pocket. The lady was sipping the last of the lemonade and looking haughtily over the top of her glass into (I suppose) the world of her thoughts. Her eyes met mine, however. "Has Gadsden—yes, I perceive he has been telling about me," she said, in her languid, formidable voice. She set her glass down and reclined among the folds of the bed-room curtains, considering me. "Gadsden has always been lavish," she mused, caressingly. "He seems destined to succeed in life," I hazarded. "O—h n—o!" she sighed, with decision. "He will fail." As she said no more, and as I began to resent the manner in which she surveyed me, I remarked, "You seem rather sure of his failure." "I am old enough to

be his mother, and yours," said Mrs. Porcher Brewton among her curtains. "He is a noble-hearted fellow, and would have been a high-souled Southern gentleman if born to that station. But what should a conductor earning \$103 50 a month be dispersing his attention on silly patents for? Many's the time I've told him what I think; but Gadsden will always be flighty." No further observations occurring to me, I took up my necklace and bracelets from the seat and put them in my pocket. "Will you permit a meddlesome old woman to inquire what made you buy those cat's-eyes?" said Mrs. Brewton. "Why—" I dubiously began. "Never mind," she cried, archly. "If you were thinking of some one in your Northern home, they will be prized because the thought, at any rate, was beautiful and genuine. 'Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see, my heart, untravelled, fondly turns to thee.' Now don't you be embarrassed by an old woman!" I desired to inform her that I disliked her, but one can never do those things; and, anxious to learn what was the matter with the cat's-eyes, I spoke amiably and politely to her. "Twenty dollars!" she murmured. "And he told you they came from the Pecos!" She gave that single melodious croak I had heard once before. Then she sat up with her back as straight as if she was twenty. "My dear young fellow, never do you buy trash in these trains. Here you are with your coat full of—what's Gadsden's absurd razor concoction?—strut—strut—bother! And Chinese paste buttons. Last summer, on the Northern Pacific, the man offered your cat's-eyes to me as native gems found exclusively in Dakota. But I just sat and mentioned to him that I was on my way home from a holiday in China, and he went right out of the car. The last day I was in Canton I bought a box of those cat's-eyes at eight cents a dozen." After this we spoke a little on other subjects, and now she's busy writing again. She's on business in California, but will read a paper at Los Angeles at the annual meeting of the Golden Daughters of the West. The meal station is coming, but we have agreed to—

Later, Friday afternoon.—I have been interrupted again. Gadsden entered, removed his hat, and shouted: "Sharon. Twenty minutes for dinner." I was call-

ing the porter to order a buffet lunch in the car, when there tramped in upon us three large men of such appearance that a flash of thankfulness went through me at having so little ready money and only a silver watch. Mrs. Brewton looked at them and said, "Well, gentlemen?" and they took off their embroidered Mexican hats. "We've got a baby show here," said one of them, slowly, looking at me, "and we'd be kind of obliged if you'd hold the box." "There's lunch put up in a basket for you to take along," said the next, "and a bottle of wine—champagne. So losing your dinner won't lose you nothing." "We're looking for somebody raised East and without local prejudice," said the third. "So we come to the Pullman." I now saw that so far from purposing to rob us they were in a great and honest distress of mind. "But I am no judge of a baby," said I; "not being mar—" "You don't have to be," broke in the first, more slowly and earnestly. "It's a fair and secret ballot we're striving for. The votes is wrote out and ready, and all we're shy of is a stranger without family ties or business interests to hold the box and do the counting." His deep tones ceased, and he wiped heavy drops from his forehead with his shirt sleeve. "We'd be kind of awful obliged to you," he urged. "The town would be liable to make it two bottles," said the second. The third brought his fist down on the back of a seat and said, "I'll make it that now." "But, gentlemen," said I, "five, six, and seven years ago I was not a stranger in Sharon. If my friend Dean Drake was still here—" "But he ain't. Now you might as well help folks, and eat later. This town will trust you. And if you quit us—" Once more he wiped the heavy drops away, while in a voice full of appeal his friend finished his thought: "If we lose you, we'll likely have to wait till this train comes in tomorrow for a man satisfactory to this town. And the show is costing us a heap." A light hand tapped my arm, and here was Mrs. Brewton saying: "For shame! Show your enterprise." "I'll hold this yere train," shouted Gadsden, "if necessary." Mrs. Brewton rose alertly, and they all hurried me out. "My slippers will stay right on when I'm down the steps," said Mrs. Brewton, and Gadsden helped her descend into the blazing dust and sun of Sharon. "Gracious!"

said she, "what a place! But I make it a point to see everything as I go." Nothing had changed. There, as of old, lay the flat litter of the town—sheds, stores, and dwellings, a shapeless congregation in the desert, gaping wide everywhere to the glassy, quivering immensity; and there, above the roofs, turned the slatted wind-wheels. But close to the tracks, opposite the hotel, was an edifice, a sort of tent of bunting, from which brass music issued, while about a hundred pink and blue sun-bonnets moved and mixed near the entrance. Little black Mexicans, like charred toys, lounged and lay staring among the ungraded dunes of sand. "Gracious!" said Mrs. Brewton again. Her eye lost nothing; and as she made for the tent the chintz peonies flowed around her, and her step was surprisingly light. We passed through the sun-bonnets and entered where the music played. "The precious blessed darlings!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "This will do for the Golden Daughters," she rapidly added, "yes, this will distinctly do." And she hastened away from me into the throng.

I had no time to look at much this first general minute. I could see there were booths, each containing a separate baby. I passed a whole section of naked babies, and one baby farther along had on golden wings and a crown, and was bawling frightfully. Their names were over the booths, and I noticed Lucille, Erskine Wales, Banquo Lick Nolin, Cuba, Manilla, Ellabelle, Bosco Grady, James J. Corbett Nash, and Aqua Marine. There was a great sign at the end, painted "Mrs. Eden's Manna in the Wilderness," and another sign, labelled "Shot-gun Smith's twins." In the midst of these first few impressions I found myself seated behind a bare table raised three feet or so, with two boxes on it, and a quantity of blank paper and pencils, while one of the men was explaining me the rules and facts. I can't remember them all now, because I couldn't understand them all then, and Mrs. Brewton was distant among the sun-bonnets, talking to a gathering crowd and feeling in the mouths of babies that were being snatched out of the booths and brought to her. The man was instructing me steadily all the while, and it occurred to me to nod silently and coldly now and then, as if I was doing this sort of thing every day. But I insisted that some one

should help me count, and they gave me Gadsden.

Now these facts I do remember very clearly, and shall never forget them. The babies came from two towns—Sharon, and Rincon its neighbor. Alone, neither had enough for a good show, though in both it was every family's pride to have a baby every year. The babies were in three classes: Six months and under, one prize offered; eighteen months, two prizes; three years, two prizes. A three-fourths vote of all cast was necessary to a choice. No one entitled to vote unless of immediate family of a competing baby. No one entitled to cast more than one vote. There were rules of entry and fees, but I forget them, except that no one could have two exhibits in the same class. When I read this I asked, how about twins? "Well, we didn't kind of foresee that," muttered my instructor, painfully. "What would be your idea?" "Look here, you sir," interposed Mrs. Brewton, "he came in to count votes." I was very glad to have her back. "That's right, ma'am," admitted the man; "he needn't to say a thing. We've only got one twins entered," he pursued, "which we're glad of. Shot-gun—" "Where is this Mr. Smith?" interrupted Mrs. Brewton. "Uptown drinking, ma'am." "And who may Mr. Smith be?" "Most popular citizen of Rincon, ma'am. We had to accept his twins because—well, he come down here himself, and most of Rincon come with him, and as we aimed to have everything pass off pleasant-like—" "I quite comprehend," said Mrs. Brewton. "And I should consider twins within the rule; or any number born at one time. But little Aqua Marine is the finest single child in that six months class. I told her mother she ought to take that splurgy ring off the poor little thing's thumb. It's most unsafe. But I should vote for that child myself." "Thank you for your valuable endorsement," said a spruce, slim young man. "But the public is not allowed to vote here," he added. He was standing on the floor and resting his elbows on the table. Mrs. Brewton stared down at him. "Are you the father of the child?" she inquired. "Oh no! I am the agent. I—" "Aqua Marine's agent?" said Mrs. Brewton, sharply. "Ha, ha!" went the young man. "Ha, ha! Well, that's good too. She's part of our exhibit. I'm in

charge of the manna-feds, don't you know?" "I don't know," said Mrs. Brewton. "Why, Mrs. Eden's Manna in the Wilderness! Nourishes, strengthens, and makes no unhealthy fat. Take a circular, and welcome. I'm travelling for the manna. I organized this show. I've conducted twenty-eight similar shows in two years. We hold them in every State and Territory. Second of last March I gave Denver—you heard of it, probably?" "I did not," said Mrs. Brewton. "Well! Ha, ha! I thought every person up to date had heard of Denver's Olympic Offspring Olio." "Is it up to date to loll your elbows on the table when you're speaking to a lady?" inquired Mrs. Brewton. He jumped, and then grew scarlet with rage. "I didn't expect to learn manners in New Mexico," said he. "I doubt if you will," said Mrs. Brewton, and turned her back on him. He was white now; but better instincts, or else business, prevailed in his injured bosom. "Well," said he, "I had no bad intentions. I was going to say you'd have seen ten thousand people and five hundred babies at Denver. And our manna-feds won out to beat the band. Three first medals, and all exclusively manna-fed. We took the costume prize also. Of course here in Sharon I've simplified. No special medal for weight, beauty, costume, or decorated perambulator. Well, I must go back to our exhibit. Glad to have you give us a call up there and see the medals we're offering, and our fifteen manna-feds, and take a package away with you." He was gone.

The voters had been now voting in my two boxes for some time, and I found myself hoping the manna would not win, whoever did; but it seemed this agent was a very capable person. To begin with, every family entering a baby drew a package of the manna free, and one package contained a diamond ring. Then, he had managed to have the finest babies of all classes in his own exhibit. This was incontestable, Mrs. Brewton admitted after returning from a general inspection; and it seemed to us extraordinary. "That's easy, ma'am," said Gadsden; "he came around here a month ago. Don't you see?" I did not see, but Mrs. Brewton saw at once. He had made a quiet selection of babies beforehand, and then introduced the manna into those homes. And everybody in the room was remark-

ing that his show was very superior, taken as a whole—they all added, "taken as a whole"; I heard them as they came up to vote for the 3-year and the 18-month classes. The 6-month was to wait till last, because the third box had been accidentally smashed by Mr. Smith. Gadsden caught several trying to vote twice. "No, you don't!" he would shout. "I know faces. I'm not a conductor for nothing." And the victim would fall back amid jeers from the sun-bonnets. Once the passengers sent over to know when the train was going. "Tell them to step over here and they'll not feel so lonesome!" shouted Gadsden; and I think a good many came. The band was playing "White Wings," with quite a number singing it, when Gadsden noticed the voting had ceased, and announced this ballot closed. The music paused for him, and we could suddenly hear how many babies were in distress; but for a moment only; as we began our counting, "White Wings" resumed, and the sun-bonnets outsang their progeny. There was something quite singular in the way they had voted. Here are some of the 3-year-old tickets: "First choice, Ulysses Grant Blum; 2d choice, Lewis Hendricks." "First choice, James Redfield; 2d, Lewis Hendricks." "First, Elk Chester; 2d, Lewis Hendricks." "Can it be?" said the excited Gadsden. "Finish these quick. I'll open the 18-monthers." But he swung round to me at once. "See there!" he cried. "Read that! and that!" He plunged among more, and I read: "First choice, Lawrence Nepton Ford, Jr.; 2d, Iona Judd." "First choice, Mary Louise Kenton; 2d, Iona Judd." "Hurry up!" said Gadsden; "that's it!" And as we counted, Mrs. Brewton looked over my shoulder and uttered her melodious croak, for which I saw no reason. "That young whipper-snapper will go far," she observed; nor did I understand this. But when they stopped the band for me to announce the returns, one fact did dawn on me even while I was reading: "Three-year-olds: Whole number of votes cast, 300; necessary to a choice, 225. Second prize, Lewis Hendricks, receiving 300. First prize, largest number of votes cast, 11, for Salvisa van Meter. No award. Eighteen-month class: Whole number of votes cast, 300; necessary to a choice, 225. Second prize, Iona Judd, receiving 300. Lillian Brown gets 15 for 1st prize.

None awarded." There was a very feeble applause, and then silence for a second, and then the sun-bonnets rushed together, rushed away to others, rushed back; and talk swept like hail through the place. Yes, that is what they had done. They had all voted for Lewis Hendricks and Iona Judd for second prize, and every family had voted the first prize to its own baby. The Browns and van Meters happened to be the largest families present. "He'll go far! he'll go far!" repeated Mrs. Brewton. Sport glittered in her eye. She gathered her curtains, and was among the sun-bonnets in a moment. Then it fully dawned on me. The agent for Mrs. Eden's Manna in the Wilderness was indeed a shrewd strategist, and knew his people to the roots of the grass. They had never seen a baby show. They were innocent. He came among them. He gave away packages of manna and a diamond ring. He offered the prizes. But he proposed to win some. Therefore he made that rule about only the immediate families voting. He foresaw what they would do; and now they had done it. Whatever happened, two prizes went to his manna-feds. "They don't see through it in the least, which is just as well," said Mrs. Brewton, returning. "And it's little matter that only second prizes go to the best babies. But what's to be done now?" I had no idea, but it was not necessary that I should.

"You folks of Rincon and Sharon," spoke a deep voice. It was the first man in the Pullman, and drops were rolling from his forehead, and his eyes were the eyes of a beleaguered ox. "You fathers and mothers," he said, and took another breath. They grew quiet. "I'm a father myself, as is well known." They applauded this. "Salvisa is mine, and she got my vote. The father that will not support his own child is not—does not—is worse than if they were orphans." He breathed again, while they loudly applauded. "But, folks, I've got to get home to Rincon. I've got to. And I'll give up Salvisa if I'm met fair." "Yes, yes, you'll be met," said voices of men. "Well, here's my proposition: Mrs. Eden's manna has took two, and I'm satisfied it should. We voted, and will stay voted." "Yes! yes!" "Well, now, here's Sharon and Rincon, two of the finest towns in this section, and I say Sharon and Rincon has equal rights to

get something out of this, and drop private feelings, and everybody back their town. And I say let this lady and gentleman, who will act elegant and on the square, take a view and nominate the finest Rincon 3-year-old and the finest Sharon 18-month they can cut out of the herd. And I say let's vote unanimous on their pick, and let each town hold a first prize and go home in friendship, feeling it has been treated right."

Universal cheers endorsed him, and he got down panting. The band played "Union Forever," and I accompanied Mrs. Brewton to the booths. "You'll remember!" shouted the orator urgently after us; "one apiece." We nodded. "Don't get mixed," he appealingly insisted. We shook our heads, and out of the booths rushed two women, and simultaneously dashed their infants in our faces. "You'll never pass Cuba by!" entreated one. "This is Bosco Grady," said the other. Cuba wore an immense garment made of the American flag, but her mother whirled her out of it in a second. "See them dimples; see them knees!" she said. "See them feet! Only feel of her toes!" "Look at his arms!" screamed the mother of Bosco. "Doubled his weight in four months." "Did he indeed, ma'am?" said Cuba's mother; "well he hadn't much to double." "Didn't he, then? Didn't he indeed?" "No at you; he didn't indeed and indeed! I guess Cuba is known to Sharon. I guess Sharon 'll not let Cuba be slighted." "Well, and I guess Rincon 'll see that Bosco Grady gets his rights." "Ladies," said Mrs. Brewton, towering but poetical with her curl, "I am a mother myself, and raised five noble boys and two sweet peerless girls." This stopped them immediately; they stared at her and her chintz peonies as she put the curl gently away from her medallion and proceeded: "But never did I think of myself in those dark weary days of the long ago. I thought of my country and the Lost Cause." They stared at her, fascinated. "Yes, m'm," whispered they, quite humbly. "Now," said Mrs. Brewton, "what is more sacred than an American mother's love? Therefore let her not shame it with anger and strife. All little boys and girls are precious gems to me and to you. What is a cold, lifeless medal compared to one of them? Though I would that all could get the prize! But they can't, you know." "No, m'm." Many mothers, with their children in

their arms, were now dumbly watching Mrs. Brewton, who held them with a honeyed, convincing smile. "If I choose only one in this beautiful and encouraging harvest, it is because I have no other choice. Thank you so much for letting me see that little hero and that lovely angel," she added, with a yet sweeter glance to the mothers of Bosco and Cuba. And I wish them all luck when their turn comes. I've no say about the 6-month class, you know. And now a little room, please."

The mothers fell back. But my head swam slightly. The 6-month class, to be sure! The orator had forgotten all about it. In the general joy over his wise and fair proposition, nobody had thought of it. But they would pretty soon. Cuba and Bosco were likely to remind them. Then we should still be face to face with a state of things that—I cast a glance behind at those two mothers of Sharon and Rincon following us, and I asked Mrs. Brewton to look at them. "Don't think about it now," said she; "it will only mix you. I always like to take a thing when it comes, and not before." We now reached the 18-month class. They were the naked ones. The 6-month had staid nicely in people's arms; these were crawling hastily everywhere, like crabs upset in the market, and they screamed fiercely when taken upon the lap. The mother of Thomas Jefferson Brayin Lucas showed us a framed letter from the statesman for whom her child was called. The letter reeked with gratitude, and said that offspring was man's proudest privilege; that a souvenir sixteen-to-one spoon would have been cheerfully sent, but 423 babies had been named after Mr. Brayin since January. It congratulated the swelling army of the People's Cause. But there was nothing eminent about little Thomas except the letter; and we selected Reese Moran, a vigorous Sharon baby, who, when they attempted to set him down and pacify him, stiffened his legs, dashed his candy to the floor, and burst into lamentation. We were soon on our way to the 3-year class, for Mrs. Brewton was rapid and thorough. As we went by the Manna Exhibit, the agent among his packages and babies invited us in. He was loudly declaring that he would vote for Bosco if he could. But when he examined Cuba, he became sure that Den-

ver had nothing finer than that. Mrs. Brewton took no notice of him, but bade me admire Aqua Marine as far surpassing any other 6-month child. I proclaimed her splendid (she was a wide-eyed, contented thing, with a head shaped like a croquet mallet), and the agent smiled modestly and told the mother that as for his babies two prizes was luck enough for them; they didn't want the earth. "If that thing happened to be brass," said Mrs. Brewton, bending over the ring that Aqua was still sucking; and again remonstrating with the mother for this imprudence, she passed on. The three-year-olds were, many of them, in costume, with extraordinary arrangements of hair; and here was the child with gold wings and a crown I had seen on arriving. Her name was Verbena M., and she personated Faith. She had colored slippers, and was drinking tea from her mother's cup. Another child, named Broderick McGowan, represented Columbus, and joyfully shouted "Ki-yi!" every half-minute. One child was attired as a prominent admiral; another as a prominent general; and one stood in a boat and was Washington. As Mrs. Brewton examined them and dealt with the mothers, the names struck me afresh—not so much the boys; Ulysses Grant and James J. Corbett explained themselves; but I read the names of five adjacent girls—Lula, Ocilla, Nila, Cusseta, and Maylene. And I asked Mrs. Brewton how they got them. "From romances," she told me, "in papers that we of the upper classes never see." In choosing for his hair, his full set of front teeth well cared for, and his general beauty, Horace Boyd, of Rincon, I think both of us were also influenced by his good sensible name, and his good clean sensible clothes. With both our selections, once they were settled, were Sharon and Rincon satisfied. We were turning back to the table to announce our choice when a sudden clamor arose behind us, and we saw confusion in the manna department. Women were running and shrieking, and I hastened after Mrs. Brewton to see what was the matter. Aqua Marine had swallowed the ring on her thumb. "It was gold! it was pure gold!" wailed the mother, clutching Mrs. Brewton. "It cost a whole dollar in El Paso." "She must have white of egg instantly," said Mrs. Brewton, handing me her purse.

"Run to the hotel—" "Save your money," said the agent, springing forward with some eggs in a bowl. "Lord! you don't catch us without all the appliances handy. We'd run behind the trade in no time. There, now, there," he added comfortingly to the mother. "Will you make her swallow it? Better let me—better let me. And here's the emetic. Lord! why, we had three swallowed rings at the Denver Olio, and I got 'em all safe back within ten minutes after time of swallowing." "You go away," said Mrs. Brewton to me, "and tell them our nominations." The mothers sympathetically surrounded poor little Aqua, saying to each other: "She's a beautiful child!" "Sure indeed she is!" "But the manna-feds has had their turn." "Sure indeed they've been recognized," and so forth, while I was glad to retire to the voting table. The music paused for me, and as the crowd cheered my small speech, some one said, "And now what are you going to do about me?" It was Bosco Grady back again, and close behind him Cuba. They had escaped from Mrs. Brewton's eye and had got me alone. But I pretended in the noise and cheering not to see these mothers. I noticed a woman hurrying out of the tent, and hoped Aqua was not in further trouble—she was still surrounded, I could see. Then the orator made some silence, thanked us in the names of Sharon and Rincon, and proposed our candidates be voted on by acclamation. This was done. Rincon voted for Sharon and Reese Moran in a solid roar, and Sharon voted for Rincon and Horace Boyd in a roar equally solid. So now each had a prize, and the whole place was applauding happily, and the band was beginning again, when the mothers with Cuba and Bosco jumped up beside me on the platform, and the sight of them produced immediate silence.

"There's a good many here has a right to feel satisfied," said Mrs. Grady, looking about, "and they're welcome to their feelings. But if this meeting thinks it is through with its business, I can tell it that it ain't—not if it acts honorable, it ain't. Does those that have had their chance and those that can take home their prizes expect us 6-month mothers come here for nothing? Do they expect I brought my Bosco from Rincon to be insulted, and him the pride of the town?" "Cuba is known to Sharon," spoke the

other lady. "I'll say no more." "Jumping Jeans!" murmured the orator to himself. "I can't hold this train much longer," said Gadsden. "She's due at Lordsburg now." "You'll have made it up by Tucson, Gadsden," spoke Mrs. Brewton, quietly, across the whole assembly from the manna department. "As for towns," continued Mrs. Grady, "that think anything of a baby that's only got three teeth—" "Ha! ha!" laughed Cuba's mother, shrilly. "Teeth! Well, we're not proud of bald babies in Sharon." Bosco was certainly bald. All the men were looking wretched, and all the women were growing more and more like eagles. Moreover, they were separating into two bands and taking their husbands with them—Sharon and Rincon drawing to opposite parts of the tent—and what was coming I cannot say; for we all had to think of something else. A third woman bringing a man mounted the platform. It was she I had seen hurry out. "My name's Shot-gun Smith," said the man, very carefully, "and I'm told you've reached my case." He was extremely good-looking, with a blue eye and a blond mustache, not above thirty, and was trying hard to be sober, holding himself with dignity. "Are you the judge?" said he to me. "Well—" I began. "N-not guilty, your honor," said he. At this his wife looked anxious. "S-self-defence," he slowly continued; "told you once already." "Why, Rolfe!" exclaimed his wife, touching his elbow. "Don't you cry, little woman," said he. "This 'll come out all right. Where 're the witnesses?" "Why, Rolfe! Rolfe!" She shook him as you shake a sleepy child. "Now see here," said he, and wagged a finger at her affectionately, "you promised me you'd not cry if I let you come." "Rolfe dear, it's not that to-day; it's the twins." "It's your twins, Shot-gun, this time," said many men's voices. "We acquitted you all right last month." "Justifiable homicide," said Gadsden. "Don't you remember?" "Twins?" said Shot-gun, drowsily. "Oh, yes, mine. Why—" He opened on us his blue eyes that looked about as innocent as Aqua Marine's, and he grew more awake. Then he blushed deeply, face and forehead. "I was not coming to this kind of thing," he explained. "But she wanted the twins to get something." He put his hand on her shoulder and straightened himself. "I done a

heap of prospecting before I struck this claim," said he, patting her shoulder. "We got married last March a year. It's our first—first—first"—he turned to me with a confiding smile—"it's our first dividend, judge." "Rolfe! I never! You come right down." "And now let's go get a prize," he declared, with his confiding pleasantness. "I remember now! I remember! They claimed twins was barred. And I kicked down the bars. Take me to those twins. They're not named yet, judge. After they get the prize we'll name them fine names, as good as any they got anywhere—Europe, Asia, Africa—anywhere. My gracious! I wish they was boys. Come on, judge! You and me 'll go give 'em a prize, and then we'll drink to 'em." He lugged me suddenly and affectionately, and we half fell down the steps. But Gadsden as suddenly caught him and righted him, and we proceeded to the twins. Mrs. Smith looked at me helplessly, saying: "I'm that sorry, sir! I had no idea he was going to be that gamesome." "Not at all," I said; "not at all!" Under many circumstances I should have delighted in Shot-gun's society. He seemed so utterly sure that, now he had explained himself, everybody would rejoice to give the remaining medal to his little girls! But Bosco and Cuba had not been idle. Shot-gun did not notice the spread of whispers, nor feel the divided and jealous currents in the air as he sat and, in expanding good-will, talked himself almost sober. To entice him out there was no way. Several of his friends had tried it. But beneath his innocence there seemed to lurk something wary, and I grew apprehensive about holding the box this last time. But Gadsden relieved me as our count began. "Shot-gun is a splendid man," said he, "and he has trailed more train-robbers than any deputy in New Mexico. But he has seen too many friends to-day, and is not quite himself. So when he fell down that time I just took this off him." He opened the drawer, and there lay a six-shooter. "It was touch and go," said Gadsden; "but he's thinking that hard about his twins he's not missed it yet. 'Twould have been the act of an enemy to leave that on him to-day.—Well, d'you say!" he broke off. "Well, well, well!" It was the tickets we took out of the box that set him exclaiming. I began to read them, and saw that the agent was no

mere politician, but a statesman. His Aqua Marine had a solid vote. I remembered his extreme praise of both Bosco and Cuba. This had set Rincon and Sharon bitterly against each other. I remembered his modesty about Aqua Marine. Of course. Each town, unable to bear the idea of the other's beating it, had voted for the manna-fed, who had 299 votes. Shot-gun and his wife had voted for their twins. I looked towards the manna department, and could see that Aqua Marine was placid once more, and Mrs. Brewton was dancing the ring before her eyes. I hope I announced the returns in a firm voice. "What!" said Shot-gun Smith; and at that sound Mrs. Brewton stopped dancing the ring. He strode to our table. "There's the winner," said Gadsden, quickly pointing to the Manna Exhibit. "What!" shouted Smith again; "and they quit me for that hammer-headed son-of-a-gun?" He whirled around. The men stood ready, and the women fled shrieking and cowering to their infants in the booths. "Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" cried Gadsden, "don't hurt him! Look here!" And from the drawer he displayed Shot-gun's weapon. They understood in a second, and calmly watched the enraged and disappointed Shot-gun. But he was a man. He saw how he had frightened the women, and he stood in the middle of the floor with eyes that did not at all resemble Aqua Marine's at present. "I'm all right now, boys," he said. "I hope I've harmed no one. Ladies, will you try and forget about me making such a break? It got ahead of me, I guess; for I had promised the little woman—" He stopped himself; and then his eye fell upon the manna department. "I guess I don't like one thing much now. I'm not after prizes. I'd not accept one from a gold-bug-combine-trust that comes sneaking around stuffing wholesale concoctions into our children's systems. My twins are not manna-fed. My twins are raised as nature intended. Perhaps if they were swelled out with trash that acts like baking-powder, they would have a medal too—for I notice he has made you vote his way pretty often this afternoon." I saw the agent at the end of the room look very queer. "That's so!" said several. "I think I'll clear out his boxes," said Shot-gun, with rising joy. "I feel like I've got to do something before I go

home. Come on, judge!" He swooped towards the manna with a yell, and the men swooped with him, and Gadsden and I were swooped with them. Again the women shrieked. But Mrs. Brewton stood out before the boxes with her curl and her chintz.

"Mr. Smith," said she, "you are not going to do anything like that. You are going to behave yourself like the gentleman you are, and not like the wild beast that's inside you." Never in his life before, probably, had Shot-gun been addressed in such a manner, and he too became hypnotized, fixing his blue eyes upon the strange lady. "I do not believe in patent foods for children," said Mrs. Brewton. "We agree on that, Mr. Smith, and I am a grandmother, and I attend to what my grandchildren eat. But this highly adroit young man has done you no harm. If he has the prizes, whose doing is that, please? And who paid for them? Will you tell me, please? Ah, you are all silent!" And she croaked melodiously. "Now let him and his manna go along. But I have enjoyed meeting you all, and I shall not forget you soon. And, Mr. Smith, I want you to remember me. Will you, please?" She walked to Mrs. Smith and the twins, and Shot-gun followed her, entirely hypnotized. She beckoned to me. "Your judge and I," she said, "consider not only your beautiful twins worthy of a prize, but also the mother and father who can so proudly claim them." She put her hand in my pocket. "These cat's-eyes," she said, "you will wear, and think of me and the judge who presents them." She placed a bracelet on each twin, and the necklace upon Mrs. Smith's neck. "Give him Gadsden's stuff," she whispered to me. "Do you shave yourself, sir?" said I, taking out the Stropine. "Vaseline and ground shells, and will last your life. Rub the size of a pea on your strop and spread it to an inch." I placed the box in Shot-gun's motionless hand. "And now, Gadsden, we'll take the train," said Mrs. Brewton. "Here's your lunch! Here's your wine!" said the orator, forcing a basket upon me. "I don't know what we'd have done without you and your mother." A flash of indignation crossed Mrs. Brewton's face, but changed to a smile. "You've forgot to name my girls!" exclaimed Shot-gun, suddenly finding his voice. "Suppose you try

that," said Mrs. Brewton to me, a trifle viciously. "Thank you," I said to Smith. "Thank you. I—" "Something handsome," he urged. "How would Cynthia do for one?" I suggested. "Shucks, no! I've known two Cynthias. You don't want that?" he asked Mrs. Smith; and she did not at all. "Something extra, something fine, something not stale," said he. I looked about the room. There was no time for thought, but my eye fell once more upon Cuba. This reminded me of Spain, and the Spanish; and my brain leaped. "I have them!" I cried. "'Armada' and 'Loyola.'" "That's what they're named!" said Shot-gun, "write it for us." And I did. Once more the band played, and we left them, all calling, "Good-by, ma'am. Good-by, judge," happy as possible. The train was soon going sixty miles an hour through the desert. We had passed Lordsburg, San Simon, and were nearly at Benson before Mrs. Brewton and Gadsden (whom she made sit down with us) and I finished the lunch and champagne. "I wonder how long he'll remember me?" mused Mrs. Brewton at Tucson, where we were on time. "That woman is not worth one of his boots."

Saturday afternoon, May 6.—Near Los Angeles. I have been writing all day, to be sure and get everything in, and now Sharon is twenty-four hours ago, and here there are roses, gardens, and many nice houses at the way-stations. Oh, George Washington, father of your country what a brindled litter have you sired!

But here the moral reflections begin again, and I copy no more diary. Mrs. Brewton liked my names for the twins. "They'll pronounce it Loyóla," she said, "and that sounds right lovely." Later she sent me her paper for the Golden Daughters. It is full of poetry and sentiment and all the things I have missed. She wrote that if she had been sure the agent had helped Aqua Marine to swallow the ring, she would have let them smash his boxes. And I think she was a little in love with Shot-gun Smith. But what a pity we shall soon have no more Mrs. Brewtons! The causes that produced her—slavery, isolation, literary tendencies, adversity, game blood—that combination is broken forever. I shall speak to Mr. Howells about her. She ought to be recorded.